

Danielle,

Hi.

My name is Patrice. We met at Villa Arson at the end of the summer of 1993.

One day, we were strolling at the end of the Promenade des Anglais, in Nice, when a group of young people larking about on the beach invited us to join them. You told me that you did not see the point of connecting with them when you already knew that you would never see them again. I have often thought about this. Why did you, aged only 23, spurn the chance of a good time, whether or not this led to anything (which made their invitation especially beautiful and generous in my eyes)? Your reaction surprised me but i was glad to be a part of your life throughout the time we spent at Villa Arson at the end of that summer, even if you did not seem to enjoy your short internship there much as i did mine. It was clear that your mother, a contemporary art gallery owner, had given you a different vision of art.

One of the directors of Villa Arson was Christian Bernard, one of the most well-established and influential art critics in France at the time, and one of the first artist-makers to propel emerging artists onto the international stage.

We also had a chance to meet Philippe Ramette, who was on a residency at the Villa. He was still in the early stages of his career but already wore a jacket and tie. He was very reserved but spoke to us about his first artistic 'prosthetics'. His diffidence and very brief oral presentation left us unsure what to make of his work, especially as there were no photographs to help us get a better idea. He had launched on this new project shortly after finishing his 'Crucified motorbike'. This piece, which was in fact on display at Villa Arson at the time, is now considered the turning point that propelled him onto the international stage.

You had been surprised to discover that i knew Les Levine and that we shared a common interest in artists like Richard Prince, Jenny Holzer, Lawrence Weiner and other conceptual artists of the period. You were only in the third year at university but were already planning to write a dissertation on Les Levine.

There was a lot i could teach you back then because i followed several emerging artists and the galleries that were launching them, as well as a number of more established figures. In fact, when i was at art school, other students would often come and see me when they felt that their work was not going anywhere. I enjoyed these conversations. I would share what i knew and turn them on to artists or magazine articles that might spur them along.

I never flaunted my knowledge of the art world when i was with you because i did not want this to skew our relationship or be the only reason you liked me.

I had also told you about the contemporary art centre that had just opened its doors in Mouans-Sartoux. That evening or the next you had an animated telephone conversation with your partner, berating him for not being aware of it, as though he could have been better informed that i was about the contemporary art world. This became a source of amusement for me, although i never told you. You asked me to wait until the end of your call but i left because you were spending a long time on the phone and had told me just a few days earlier that i was a 'sheep', only to apologise the next minute—not that i was offended. We ended up visiting this art centre but the exhibition left us cold and you were still angry at your partner.

You had no idea of my background or that an internship at Villa Arson was a major opportunity for me. I was conscious that we were from opposite ends of the social spectrum. I don't think that i could have given you something that you did not already have. We never talked about that. In spite of the social gulf that separated us, i dreamt that we might forge a complementary artistic relationship and work as a duo. You had a sharp eye and i was immediately drawn to your clarity of thought and brilliant mind.

I can still remember the moments we shared together, how we looked for each other, never missing an opportunity to meet up.

I was disappointed that you left without saying goodbye on the last morning or evening of your stay.

Time has passed since we first met. If we met again today it is possible we might not like each other. However, i think i would not be mistaken if i said that we felt a magnetic attraction at the time. When other people met us they assumed we were a couple and very much in love with each other. I have never felt anything as strong for anyone else since.

After you left Villa Arson, i can't remember how many times i tried to call you but there was no answer. I could not stop myself. And then one day i did manage to reach you through a stroke of good luck. You invited me to come to Paris. I was hoping that we might meet one on one and pick up where we had left off at the Villa.

One evening, you met me with your partner in a car so large it seemed inconceivable that it could wind its way through the streets of Paris. We went from one gallery opening to another but we both felt uninspired. Your partner, however, seemed to find some solace in the professional networking opportunities these events probably presented for him. On one occasion that evening, i felt a magnetic pull between us once again. It was at one of these openings, when you walked up to me alone to ask if i wanted to go to another gallery with the two of you. Later that evening, i met a wonderfully well-matched couple that looked very much in love. I was struck by the beauty of their relationship and remember speaking very openly with them. I am sorry that i did not have a chance to get to know them better.

The man, who seemed to know you well, confessed his surprise at seeing you with a male friend. This was unusual for you, according to him, and it had not escaped them that there was something very special about the bond between us.

I also remember him telling me that your partner was a very nice man. I never wanted to interfere in the relationship you had with him at the time. When we left our last opening, you took your leave of Georg Baselitz and he went back to sitting alone and bored on a red bench seat while the director of Brittany's Contemporary Art Fund blathered on about art to a group of women who could not have been more clueless about artistic endeavour.

In the car you both asked me what galleries might be more interesting than the ones we had visited. Naturally, i knew about various galleries that were promoting a new wave of promising young artists, many of whom did in fact leave their mark on the 1990s and beyond. Although i knew about these galleries, i did not have their addresses because it had not occurred to me that i might be lucky enough to have the opportunity to visit any of them that evening. The two of you exchanged a look. I saw the smirk on your faces.

I immediately asked you to drop me anywhere you could along the route you were taking across Paris. A sense of despair and a great sadness came over me as i realized that the joy i felt at having met you would not be repeated and our paths would never cross again.

I wanted to write to you for a long time but could never find the words to tell you what i felt about you then and for long afterwards.

I have little hope that you will get in touch with me again just for the pleasure of a chat.

But i do hope that confessing my love for you will allow me to stop thinking about the blissful moments that we spent together and that still haunt my memory.

The latest artist whose work i have enjoyed is Theo Trian ([@theo.trian](#) on Instagram):  
'Radicalisation Pipeline'. A trailer is available on Youtube at the following address:  
<https://youtu.be/20AGYYogxZ4>.

Patrice.

*[www.lenieblue.com](http://www.lenieblue.com)*